

TUTORIAL
2.8

God promised & then sent His Holy Spirit

This tutorial looks again at the time when Jesus left the earth to go to the place where we also will go. It discusses the coming of the Holy Spirit, His role at that time, and how He is helping us today.

The Scripture referred to in this tutorial is: **Mark 14:22-24, John 14:1-3, 15-17, 26, 16:12-15, Acts 1:4, 8.**

Last time

We moved quickly past 1000 years of history to John, who was given the task of preparing people for the Messiah's arrival. God's Spirit equipped John for the work he had to do. After John baptized Jesus and God announced that He was completely pleased with His Son, God's Spirit came to stay with Him 24/7 so He could give Jesus the wisdom and power from God He'd need for everything. Satan immediately tested His special relationship with God, but Jesus was unmoved in His commitment to being guided by God's Word and Spirit. Jesus began to use God's Narrative to declare who He was to His own people.

Jesus shared a final meal with His disciples

As we know, Jesus chose twelve men to be His close followers during the time He was travelling around and teaching. While they were with Him He was preparing them to be His appointed witnesses and representatives - *Apostles* is the specific term used. He modelled for them how to share God's Narrative with others in such a way that people would understand and accept the Good News about Him...they were also learning invaluable lessons about what to teach and how to disciple any who did accept that Good News. And we know that of those twelve, only one - Judas - failed to go on and give their lives for the Task Jesus equipped them for.

But let's fast-forward about three years. Jesus' disciples had seen and heard some amazing things during that period. He had healed many people of sickness, caused blind people to see again, made legs and arms deformed from birth function normally, even brought people back to life...He'd calmed storms, fed thousands with just a few fragments of food, and ordered demons out of many people who they'd been tormenting. He'd also taught many

people in their town synagogues, at the Temple in Jerusalem, beside roads and the lake in Galilee and on hilltops. He'd challenged assumptions, put His finger on areas of spiritual ignorance, and exposed hypocrisy - particularly among the Jewish religious leaders. The Jewish leaders had grown to hate Him for it. They were jealous because of the crowds that He was drawing. They were afraid that the occupying Romans would use it as an excuse to clamp down and reduce their powers...they'd lose their power over their fellow Jews with all the associated lifestyle benefits.

Things were coming to a head. Jerusalem was crowded with Jews from all over the Mediterranean basin, there for the Passover festival. Judas Iscariot had conspired with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus to them. Jesus knew all of this of course...knew that He had only a short time left with His disciples before His death. He and His disciples found a place to eat the Passover meal together. This was the most important festival related to the Old Covenant. It reminded them of God's mercy and protection on that one night in Egypt, but also of the escape from slavery and the special relationship God had with His chosen people.

Now Jesus introduced something that would replace the Passover with a way for *us* under the New Covenant to remember God's grace and mercy. A simple way to regularly remind ourselves what it cost Jesus to rescue *us* from spiritual bondage...also to celebrate the relationship we have together with Him, and to look forward with joy to being with Him forever.

We're familiar with the simple symbols...He used bread because that was on the table in front of Him. He told the disciples that just as He was breaking it and handing it around to them, His body would be injured as a sacrifice for the sins of others. Then, He picked up a cup of wine and said that it represented His blood that would run out in the process of Him being sacrificed. *He* was the final and ultimate Passover lamb. *His* blood satisfied God's righteous demands for justice against sin (Mark 14:22-24).

And so, as He explained, His blood would confirm a New Covenant between God and His people...all the old, inadequate rituals and measures for covering people's sin, getting them through another day, another month and year, avoiding God's judgement, hoping they'd done what was needed for His favour...all of that was to be done away with. So now, when a group of us under the New Covenant remember Him in a similar way to how He and His disciples did that night, it's definitely not a ritual that changes anything in God's eyes. Nothing magical happens, it's just a simple bit of food we eat and liquid we drink. But we do it because our Lord said He wants us to, and because it is a wonderful way for us to regularly remember what He did for us.

All this talk about Him dying and leaving was confusing and distressing for the disciples. Why did He have to die? Where was He going? And where would

that leave them and His other followers...a small group of mostly uneducated, politically powerless people? How would they know what to do? Who would encourage them? What hope would there be of the Good News about Him spreading?

Jesus is already there - where we are going

Jesus knew everything that was bothering them, including their unspoken questions...just as He knows ours. He told them that their future was bright and full of hope (John 14:1-3). Yes, He was going away, but the parting would only be temporary. In time, they'd be reunited in a place that He was going to get ready for them. And at that point, it would be permanent...they'd always be with Him from then on.

What was true for those rather sad, confused men with Him that night is true for us. When we're confused and discouraged, this is something amazing we have to hold on to...a certainty we can look forward to. When Jesus died He rose again with a different kind of body, one that cannot die...but a real body nonetheless. The disciples could see and talk with Him. He ate food with them. One of them, Thomas, was able to put his hand on Jesus' side where He'd been wounded. The point is, when Jesus left the earth to return to His Father, He went to a real place. We can't really understand *where* that is. It won't show up on a GPS search or on Google Maps, but it's real...in fact, more 'real' than the places we know that actually won't last forever. Jesus has gone there before us and is eagerly waiting for the time when we'll join Him.

He promised to send God's Spirit to guide them

But as real and encouraging as that might be, it's in the future. What about now? How would the disciples survive in a culture that was, on the whole, antagonistic to Jesus and those who follow Him? How would they know how to live, and how to relate to others?

Jesus had the solution ready before they'd even begun to form the questions in their minds. He said He'd send someone else to fill the need they were sensing. The term He used for this person was the Greek word *paráklētos*, which has been translated into English as Comforter, Helper, and also Advocate (John 14:15-17, 26). All these shades of meaning are most definitely true of the One He was sending. Jesus explained that He was talking about God's Holy Spirit...the One who had been present at Creation, who'd given people the wisdom and strength for specific tasks during Old Covenant times, and who had been with Jesus the whole time He'd been teaching and doing miracles.

So yes, Jesus was leaving them in a physical sense, but God would send His Spirit to take His place and do everything - and more - that they'd been relying on Jesus for. The distinguishing characteristic of the Spirit He highlighted was

that He *leads into all truth*. What He'd be putting His limitless energy into once He had come to live in them would be helping them know, understand, believe in and live out, the *Truth*. *All truth*...the whole of God's Narrative. In fact, some of those men who were there would be given the special privilege of adding to God's written Word. They had the Narrative from the Old Covenant, and now guided by the Spirit they would soon begin writing the final chapters - God's Narrative for the New Covenant. But they, themselves, would also be part of what God was revealing to the world. The Spirit would lead them to align their lives to the truth...the Truth that they'd been eyewitnesses to as they'd been with Jesus for the last three years.

The Spirit would also give them the ability to communicate that truth with individuals and communities trapped by Satan's lies and the false narratives that they've told themselves.

The disciples didn't need to be concerned that they'd forget the things Jesus had said...He reassured them that the Holy Spirit would constantly remind them of *everything* they had learned from Him. Actually, as things stood at that moment, there were many areas the disciples wouldn't be able to understand. But the Spirit would come and build on the truth-foundations Jesus had already laid (John 16:12-15). He would do His work with care and precision, gradually helping them understand all the Narrative threads - past and future - that tie together in Jesus Christ. The incredible thing for us is that the Holy Spirit also lives in us and is helping us to understand Truth in the same way Jesus promised.

The Spirit would equip them for the Task

The disciples would experience a roller coaster of emotions in the days after Jesus told them these things. The fear and confusion of His arrest, the trauma and devastation of His death, then the jubilant excitement of finding out that He was alive again. They had spent some time with Him, but must have sensed that things were not like before. It was not going to go on like this indefinitely.

Forty days after His resurrection they were gathered together with Him again...minus Judas Iscariot of course. He reminded them of the things He'd explained before...that He'd be sending the Holy Spirit to come to take His place (Acts 1:4). He said they'd be *baptized*, like someone being baptized in water by John. Wow. They didn't fully understand but this sounded pretty extreme, all consuming, and a truly defining moment. He said they should wait in Jerusalem for this wonderful gift that God would give to them. Then He referred to the huge, challenging but awesome responsibility that they now shared with Him...the Task of taking the whole Good News about Him to the immediate neighborhood, the larger community and out to the scattered ethnic groups around the world (Acts 1:8).

This was not something they could hope to do with their own limited wisdom and strength. They wouldn't care enough, be patient and disciplined enough,

or have the insights needed to communicate His Narrative with others. But God's Spirit can and does. He has all of God's infinite love, patience, faithfulness, wisdom and power at His disposal. And He was going to make it available to them...and of course to *us* who have inherited the ongoing Task from the Apostles. Jesus said that when the Spirit came on to them He'd empower them for the Task they now had before them.

These were the final things Jesus said to them before disappearing up into a cloud as He returned to be with His Father in Heaven...where He is now. The rest of God's Narrative communicates what the Spirit taught them, and then guided them, and others, to do over the next few decades as they obediently took on that Task.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. In a friendly, open conversation, what would you say to someone who believes that the so-called *sacraments* (the bread and wine) become the actual flesh and blood of Jesus in a Catholic Mass?
2. What are some of the ways that you believe the Holy Spirit guides you? Are you conscious, in a daily way, of His role in your life?
3. Why do you think that the Task committed to the disciples by Jesus is not yet finished? If we were to ask Him about that as His Church, what do you think His response would be to us?